

Summer 1960

# outposts

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## EDWIN BROCK

### *A Choice of Charms*

**I**N an hour of boredom I receive  
a disc of bread, a sip of wine;  
my captive heart upon my sleeve  
comments the moment: Quite divine!  
I leave at last and, leaving, must  
scuff my shoes in golden dust.

I've held the sandgrains in my hand  
and seen the fallen world appear.  
Wild flowers have bloomed. I understand  
the stars that see away the seer  
but latterly have breathed the lust  
that burns upon the golden dust.

In any hour of wondering how  
the bowels would burn in some new fire  
I'd chance forever on the now  
of limbs that whistle where they tire  
to watch the rain that rolls like rust  
in footprints in the golden dust.

And then it would be easy, but  
I'd turn again like some fool top  
to tease forgiveness, frightened that  
the fallen grace would not stand up  
to stifle in the later lust  
that scintillates the golden dust.



## VERNON WATKINS

### *Demands of the Muse*

I CALL up words that he may write them down.  
My falling into labour gives him birth.  
My sorrows are not sorrows till he weeps.  
I learn from him as much as he from me  
Who is my chosen and my tool in time.

I am dumb: my burden is not like another.  
My lineaments are hid from him who knows me.  
Great is my Earth with undelivered words.  
It is my dead, my dead, that sing to him  
This ancient moment; and their voice is he.

Born into time of love's perceptions, he  
Is not of time. The acts of time to him  
Are marginal. From the first hour he knows me  
Until the last, he shall divine my words.  
In his own solitude he hears another.

I make demands of him more than another.  
He sets himself a labour built of words  
Which, through my lips, bring sudden joy to him.  
He has the illusion that at last he knows me.  
When the toil ends, my confidant is he.

Vision makes wise at once. Why then must he  
Wait through so many years before he knows me?  
The bit is tempered to restrain his words  
And make laborious all that's dear to him.  
So he remains himself and not another.

Why is he slow to praise me when another  
Falls at my feet? What conscience moves in him  
To make a stubborn stand before he knows me?  
It is reluctance that resolves his words.  
I have been cursed, indeed, by such as he.

Yet, though a school invoke me, it is he  
I choose, for opposition gives those words  
Their strength; and there is none more near to him  
In thought. It is by conflict that he knows me  
And serves me in my way and not another.

### ALASDAIR ASTON

#### *Notice is Hereby Given of a Sale*

**L**OT ninety-eight:  
The crimson girl with crystal tears—  
Finest piece I've seen in years—  
Really quite the collector's gem.  
Who'll start me off, then? Who'll say ten?  
Sold to the man insatiate,  
Gone to the world for a bit of fun—

Last time going, going, gone.  
Lot ninety-nine:  
So many harps  
Tuned to three sharps  
With chorus angelic,  
What am I bid for this relic?  
Once it was mine.  
Gone to the Gentleman dressed in Black,  
Gone to the Devil, gone for a smack.

Lot one double o:  
Three or four oceans  
Plus human emotions—  
A scrap of dry land,  
A bird in the hand—  
Not much to show.  
Hammered dreadfully finally down  
To the nodding millionaire and clown.

## BERNARD SMITH

### *Time and Western Man*

*(dedicated to the man next door)*

HE pauses  
at his green-house door—  
the several causes  
that have brought him there  
confuse him—  
was it to prune the vine  
or pot tomatoes?  
to mend a pane of glass  
or what? God knows:  
the moment he awoke that morning  
his head was swarming  
with jobs left over from the day before  
a debit carried forward every night—  
he'd never put it right  
and now the day's gone  
and the jobs not done  
the hours lopped off by numbers  
one, two, three, four,  
one wonders what the sense is—  
after all, what's being spent  
in all this talk of spending time?  
Perhaps for all our show of busy-ness  
we're standing still and something  
glides away beneath us  
like the tide  
beneath a boat that's moored:  
always there's that sense  
of something irretrievable  
that slips away no matter  
how we rush to catch it—  
the more we rush, the less we have of it:  
so there's an irony behind it all



and someone has the laugh on us—  
whichever way you look at it  
it's not that we are killing time  
it's time that's killing us.

A prick upon his arm  
recalls his errand—  
there's just enough time left  
to spray the roses—  
ten minutes now  
will save an hour tomorrow.

## SHIRLEY BRIDGES

### *Liaisons and Legacies*

THE life we live is not the life it seems.  
Our sober breeding, owning, handing down  
Of names and acres, this counts, and is known  
A hundred years on, when the pundits meet,  
—Discountenancing gossip in the street—  
This will be all; so seemly life forgets.

The future cares not what we've really been:  
Victory to the herd, and cringing time.

The mightiest alone can sometimes win  
And found a dynasty on a mortal sin,  
Defeat for us, if all our years of loving  
Pass by unsanctioned: useless both breeding and grieving;  
For ancient honour still protects the house  
Of property, propriety, and peace.  
All else is dust. So seemly life forgets.

Your life's blood may be scarlet, but in death  
That life will seem as proper as your breath.

## JACK CLEMO

### *Lebanese Harvest*

IN the dim convent light  
She prays for me on a broad rock,  
Her oasis of shadowing saints.  
At the end of panic flight  
There is a recess clear of memory's taints  
Where ripened mercies interlock.

I have soothed a tortured pulse  
Within the cloisters, or thought-tides would still convulse  
Too darkly over the dead Nile.  
How did my words eclipse the mad sun  
And bring the first smile  
In a cool foreign heaven  
To this daughter of Lebanon?

Far out from the cedars, that desert trek:  
Red swoon of mirage, haggling sandstorms, then the port.  
No bargaining amid the wreck,  
In the drained sanctuary, even,  
For a winged clue behind fate's sport,  
Until a ray of mine  
Embraced the design.

This was not my harvest dream, but the palm-branch is  
real  
And precious in my hand.  
I have restored a soul: will they ever feel,  
These sceptics, such a thrill as I know tonight  
Out of the exotic land,  
Out of Egypt, as she takes her rosary  
And thanks her saints for me?



## TOM WRIGHT

### *Not the True Hunter*

NOT the true hunter takes from air  
the random pheasant, nor from life  
the stray thing started unaware  
of killer and of killing knife.

Through tribe of like and clan of kind  
he weasels out the chosen scent,  
The hunter's sure and single mind  
hallows his bloodiest intent.

Fear beats his quarry's bursting heart  
foams on its lips and fogs its sight,  
harries the hurried hours that part  
life and the boundary of flight.

Goad of strange Gods the hunter feels,  
scourge of lovelust upon his back ;  
the hard hunter upon *his* heels  
drives him along the chosen track.

Till flight and follow, fear, desire  
meet in extremity to end  
as fused within a single fire  
where hope is foe despair is friend.

Endurance blown the hunted waits,  
death velvet blooms upon its eyes.  
The tragic hunter consummates  
and dies before his victim dies.

## HUGH CREIGHTON HILL

### *Triangle in the Garden*

(for J. G. Bissley)

En attrapant du temps, à tout on remédie.

**H**EART no longer apprenticed to ecstasy,  
mastered under the harping peril of hope,  
puts out this tentacle through obliterating mould,  
fungoid, arbitrary as a rat,  
to cheat despair.

Soul clambers about the branches of the plum tree  
carrying banners cartooned with antique wars,  
shaking down leaves like cancelled pawn-tickets,  
emblems of intellectual poverty,  
to bury the death-wish.

Mind hovers high above the philadelphus,  
over the lammas-shoots on the crumpled sycamores,  
pausing for rain, clear snow, or clashes of hailstones,  
manifestations from an alien sky,  
to clinch the bargain.

## STEWART CONN

### *Object Lesson*

**N**ATURE stoops to no celluloid pretext  
To catch us sleeping in the stalls  
These days, for we can trail next  
Week's weather and anticipate 'squalls

From the south'. But despite our prophetic  
Clap-trap we constantly express surprise  
At season's change: the most peripatetic  
Snowman must find it difficult to analyse

A one-day Spring; and despite wheel and graph  
What meteorologist can measure Winter's mood?  
So elementals have the right to laugh  
Up their sleeves at talk of 'dead wood',

And the shabby poet need not cross his tracks  
Or limp into hiding. Green shoots below ground  
Lift tomorrow's oak; seeds kindle as ice cracks;  
And a dumb moment holds splinters of sound.

## JACK LINDEMAN

### *Inconstancy*

**A**NOTHER season, yet the pompous flower refuses  
To retreat. The Summer leaves  
Become the fallen glass on which I cut

My feet and bleed a poppied change  
In the lumpy ocean of sitting hills.

How the heart warmed like heart-shaped wood,  
As though the hearth of her mouth breathed flames of  
A dragon's love. But the wood burned

And projectiles of words came cycloning through

The tunnels of my ears. The ash-grown  
Heart has flown like mop-shook dust and is housed  
Today in a different frame and flesh.

*U.S.A.*



## LEWIS HOSEGOOD

### *On Entering an Unfamiliar City at Dawn*

**A**T last the horizontal road loops off,  
taut as a bolas whirled, and is hurled  
hard for Ghent.

The night's rain being done,  
the wan sky awakens on a virgin world  
and, pink as a tulip, the day dawns  
so slowly, with the Friesians one by one  
hind-staggering up from the mist.  
A solitary light  
from a peak-roofed farm with henpecked lawns,  
one egg-yolk window in the wall's white  
where an early riser anticipates the sun—  
then a cleft bridge, a brimming canal, and suddenly  
the town comes upon us all unprepared.

Clattering through  
a tremendous gate—(could it be where those bolts  
undrew?)—  
we enter a merchant solidity, cubed and squared.  
Granite houses, prosperous, pitiless and steep,  
face gravely out with grim jaws  
like a transported Edinburgh.  
In this vault the comfortable Flemings sleep  
behind their closed sepulchral doors.  
The carillon is silenced while the burgomaster snores.  
Yet the grey place is not to be thought dead,  
for pigeons perch on the stone facades  
and, picking the cobblestones, a fastidious cat  
potters home to bed.

## J. PHOENICE

### *Revisited*

**E**MOTION was a tiger held  
Within the thicket of the air  
So still that he who left it tangled  
Did not know that it was there  
But passed without defence or care.

So when the light sprang fiercely on him  
It knocked him flat, pinned him to lie  
Breathless with ambushed time's full weight,  
The beetling buildings' burning eye  
And five-inch claws of ecstasy.

## KENNETH GARDINER

### *Homage to Piranesi*

**H**UGE as the progressive sum of death.  
There can be no limit to this space  
Groins of rock and brick entomb, and all  
Time and distance reimpose the truth—  
Of these prisons, of the eye that prays  
For the sunlight noise against a wall.

Ropes traverse the silence, and the years  
Fall away to dust on folded flags.  
Muffled air. Machines stand up like ears  
Down the corridors. Impotent rags  
Clothe uncertain gestures, certain pains;  
Words are dead, and shadows of disgust  
Fall from crowded porticoes to chains.  
Catwalks rise, communicate with rust.

*Japan*

## PHILIP GARDNER

### *Blowing the Gaff*

CHANCING on some poem in a magazine,  
You would be wrong, reader, thinking to trace  
Behind the personal pronoun a personal face;  
Misled if you discerned a silhouette  
Between the lines, like God's in mountain-snow.

It is you overhear, not I address.  
Because my words sound sweet, it does not follow  
I would shake hands with you. Because, on paper,  
I sprawl in elegies upon the past,  
Or phrase the beauty that I cannot touch,  
It does not follow you would find me sad.

You would not recognize me from my work,  
See in the clowning, or the empty, face,  
The calm or the intensity you read.  
Poems are high-jump records, altitudes  
I cannot breathe in long; before and after  
My life is normal, and my muscles twitch.

The fixity of print misleads you.  
Poems, the products of my passing moods,  
Construct upon the page a world of words  
That gesture in a false, eternal present,  
—Stone monuments that outlive their subject's death,  
Or paper dark with soot, a car's exhaust.

Only in struggling process are they mine;  
Finished, their architectural peace is strange  
And seems another's work. The need to write,  
Probed by the stab of beauty and old loss,  
Swells like a boil with pus until the cool  
Ordered analysis of words relieves.



The spur is worry, the result delight  
Almost by accident. Our poems differ.  
With the last full-stop, my feeling's obsolete,  
Dated as soon as written. The itch soothed,  
The poem is no longer mine, but yours,  
Lives independent now, vibrates for ever  
Although my hammer moves to another note.  
What's news to you is history for me.

My volume is a curious museum  
Of former wounds, now healed, ballast thrown out,  
Old skins discarded; no more accurate  
Description of myself than photographs  
Decades outdated. Yet for you the wounds  
Still bleed as fresh as ever on the page,  
The book's myself, cut-and-dried between stiff covers.

For you, knowing no better, I am my work.  
But, skimming, you have no inkling of the blanks,  
The ordinary weeks between each poem  
(Sequential here smooth as conveyor-belt),  
What turbid private waters they surmount  
Like bridges pier-supported, based in mud.  
You do not see my heels for poems' dust.

So neatly are they ranged, like epitaphs,  
Cemetery-headstones stretching for page on page,  
They seem solid achievement, enough laurels,  
Surely, to rest on. You would not understand  
My discontent, my unbelonging eye  
Reading back. To stay there would be burial.

Only the unborn poem is important;  
—In prospect, tenuous. Merely to have written  
Is cold comfort to poor poets unsure  
Where the next poem will come from, if it comes.

I live on after and outside my book ;  
My name, conventional sign, does not attach me  
Who quit each frame of words soon as it's drawn.  
To you, my poems contain me, but I am  
A man, who writes, my poems postcards sent  
From one-day stops on an extended journey.

When this arrives, I shall be somewhere else.

*Cyprus*

## MICHAEL GOYMOUR

### *End of An Affair*

**I**T is not the consummation we had planned ;  
The silent theatre, the abandoned play,  
The dancer, the mocked spirit, lying unmanned,  
The search for something adequate to say ;  
Footsteps echoing on a bare floor,  
And the end, on a dark night, she closing a door,  
And I, in farewell, raising an empty hand.

What's my desolation? To be understood  
At last, much as I hoped, observed entire,  
A naked life in every form and mood,  
And left. She has gone, having felt my clearest fire,  
Scanned hearth and board and corners of the heart ;  
She has gone ; and the bare echo floors my art,  
Play's end: "We can't go on. It's no good".

Magnetic enemies, destroying growth,  
Spellbound too long, must find the will to move.  
I hear her footsteps echo, and am loth  
To leave without some profit for spent love.  
It seems I bear off nothing from the field,  
Unless my spirit under pressure yield  
Hard diamond, that single tear, the truth.

## FRED COGSWELL

### *Old Game*

*"Go in and out the windows,  
Go in and out the windows,  
Go in and out the windows,  
As you have done before."*

In and out the windows I danced with dusty lies  
And stirred the motes that dimmed my true love's lovely  
eyes;  
Behind each pain I saw there, sweet waters welled to clear,  
But with our pride we damned them, as we had done  
before.

*"Go up and down the valley,  
Go up and down the valley,  
Go up and down the valley,  
As you have done before."*

Up and down the valley I longed with young desire  
To scorch her body's meadow in a lust-consuming fire,  
But when at passion's touch our bodies' flame would soar  
We drew back fearful then as we had done before.

*"Go, kneel before your lover,  
Go, kneel before your lover,  
Go, kneel before your lover,  
For the golden gates are closed."*

I knelt before my true love and offered her a ring,  
And when she took it from me all birds began to sing.  
She let me share an Eden of sweet and thornless rose  
But she grew another garden and the golden gates were  
closed.

*Canada*



## PAUL GREENE

### *The Seekers*

**T**HE images which move before their eyes  
Are co-eternal with their camels' tread :  
Always the sand is ready with its lies,  
And always clothed in mirage shines ahead  
The moving pentacle which fills their skies.

They could not sleep beneath that pilgrim star  
Though others scorned its bright imperative ;  
So they became the strangers that they are  
Set on a desert path with gifts to give  
And seen by others only from afar.

Those who remain are glad that they have gone—  
Tiresome the seekers, with their busy stir ;  
Restless their ghosts are, and will not have done  
Bearing their gold and frankincense and myrrh  
Toward that joyful and obscure horizon.

## PAUL WODDIS

### *Youth*

**W**HO can open the doors of his face  
When, lying down, the sun has entered his head  
And dyed all his sunbeams red with grace?  
All his daffodil-yellow thoughts are dead.

Who can shutter the wings of his ears  
When, crisp as glass on gravel, sounds, blue sounds  
Cutting through stone, dance without fear  
On notes as big as wounds?

Who can shatter the ice of his lips  
When trees, like big men rising, face the breeze,  
But only he can face the odour of ships  
On the grey charnel seas?

Who can flutter the birds of his hands  
When first, a young man bronzed by thirst,  
He learnt his future trade among the summer sands  
Before returning to the shifting mast?

W. M. TIDMARSH

*The Threat*

**N**OBODY actually voiced it, nobody gestured,  
No warning or ultimatum came with his post:  
But something that lay beyond recollection pestered  
And he knew that if he stayed all would be lost.

So changing his name he went to live abroad  
And was surprised to find how thick his beard  
Sprouted. And though he daily listened for word  
It seemed he was not pursued by what he feared.

Years later when the picture in his passport  
Showed him the face of one known long ago  
Prosperity tricked him into the resort  
Of going back to see. He sensed the trap  
Too late, and saw the hand raised for the blow  
And glimpsed in a glass the face of the passport snap.

ROBERT NYE

*The Bungalow*

THE eaves are full . . . it is the eaves  
I listen to mostly of a night  
For the bucket chilled by the hand of glory  
To come glorious down where the top-floor reeves  
A tightrope probably out of sight.  
Yet, this house only has one storey.

How then was she found hanging there  
In the sorry light at the turn of the stair?  
From a great height they say she fell—  
And now when she knocks on the upper doors  
Although I know they are open as well  
Sometimes I think there are other floors.

Sometimes I think there is a lift  
Only to be seen outside the house,  
And the roof in flight pursued by leaves.  
The table still keeps her breakfast gift  
Of a night ago, and no spider nor mouse  
Nor shifting draught in the eaves is in the eaves.

Well, haunt me whom I have not seen  
Nor dreamed of, nor perhaps been!  
Sometimes when I think I have met her,  
The mistress of the house I thought I wanted,  
I think I would do as well to forget her  
And leave the masterless house unhaunted.

The eaves are full . . . it is the eaves  
I listen to mostly of a night  
For the bucket chilled by the hand of glory  
To come glorious down where the top-floor reeves  
A tightrope possibly out of sight.  
You know, this house has another story. . . .



### Ezra Pound; 'Grant Translateur'.

*Thrones: Cantos 96-109* (Faber & Faber, 18s.).

AS long ago as 1908, Ezra Pound was doing his best to "make modern poetry possible in English" through his avant-garde pamphleteering. And yet his early verse was that of a post-pre-Raphaelite lyricist! His 'development' for some years was little more than an increasing skill in pastiche: pseudo-Browning; 'Cathay' (though his later Chinese translations are another matter entirely). Pound's growing despair at the cultural decline of the West was shocked by the First World War into trenchant expression. That group of poems about Mauberley, the unwanted poet wandering through the world of philistinism and commerce, should be one of the classics of our language.

The great translator never again reverted to pastiche. Such work as *Homage to Sextus Propertius* is truly original; though its hard-won sophistication is, perhaps, too readily over-estimated. And even such creative translation was insufficient to satisfy the author of the "dumb-born book" that had diagnosed the "tawdry cheapness" of a "botched civilisation".

*Mauberley* was diagnosis; *The Cantos* were meant as a cure. Pound attempts, in them, to set old and new, cultures barbarous, civilised and decadent, side by side. The claim is sometimes made that this attempt was successful. But Pound's talents, for biting anecdote and impassioned lyric, are not the best equipment for writing a socio/philosophic poem. And Pound's range of reference is not so startlingly wide as it at first appears to be. His ideas are few, and monotonously linked to a Platonic conception of the philosopher-statesman, the good tyrant who will put everything right for us. Also, it is doubtful whether the well-worn condition of our language will bear a long poem. In order to communicate to the modern reader, words must define each other into a context so vivid and concentrated that prolonged reading would become wearisome, even supposing it were possible for the poet to sustain his verse at such a pitch. And if he does not, the verse will be intermittent, the poem disrupted by deadweight prose or even, as in many of *The Cantos*, by what seems to be explanatory notes and rough jottings.

Most so-called long poems are only arguably unified: *Paradise Lost*, *The Prelude*, *Don Juan*, *The Ring and the Book*. Just because these poems contain much dead writing, and are therefore disrupted, we can hardly jettison them. We may read them from time to time in entirety, but we will tend to select for constant re-

reading those passages in which the poet is at his best. People who rightly declare *The Cantos* inferior to *Mauberley* often, wrongly, choose to ignore them. They should re-read (or read) Cantos 1-3, 13, 17, 45, 47, 49, 81, 90, 92 and 106. These, to say nothing of numerous shorter passages, are, in turn, magnificent, heroic, in turn lyrical or brilliantly anecdotal. In these, Pound is doing what he can do well; and if *The Cantos* aren't *De Rerum Natura* or *Divina Commedia*, they still are more than a quarrying-ground for American scholars.

And so there is no point in my trying to summarise *Thrones*. Such a summary would necessarily provoke unresolvable disagreement. So much has to be supplied by the reader that interpretation becomes a kind of subjective re-writing, acceptable only to the like-minded. There will, however, be much less divergence of opinion about what is valuable in the book. As in previous sections of *The Cantos*, one has to anthologise.

Canto 96 has a pretty resumé of Justinian's legal reforms :

"If a wall falls inside of ten years the builder  
unless he can prove god's wrath must  
put it up again at his own cost."

The tension between the antique sanctions and the colloquial English in which they are couched places at once the basic human likeness between Justinian's period and ours and, also, their social unlikeness.

Canto 99 broadens out from an assertion of style into a consideration of behaviour, education and, eventually, social organization. There is, throughout, that innate sense of order which, exasperated by our disordered world, found solace in the hero-worship of the strong man.

"Small birds sing in chorus,  
Harmony is in the proportion of branches  
as clarity (chao)  
Compassion, tree's root and water-spring;  
The state : order, inside a boundary. . . ."

Canto 106, like the similar Canto 90 in *Rock-drill*, invokes the goddesses; this time, as a means of dedication—"Help me to need". Pound, like Milton, whom he dislikes but whom he much resembles, has a seemingly unquenchable fount of classical lyricism which is always to hand. It is something often found in bookish and idealistic men, this yearning for a golden age.

"Selena, foam on the wave-swirl  
 Out of gold light flooding the peristyle  
 Trees open in Paros,  
 White feet as Carrara's whiteness  
 in Xoroi.  
 God's eye art 'ou.  
 The columns gleam as if cloisonné,  
 The sky is leaded with elm-boughs."

Even though the lyric dreamer was shocked into the rude awakening of *Mauberley*, he seems most himself when, in *The Cantos*, he "dares Persephone's threshold".

"O singer of Persephone  
 In the dim meadows desolate  
 Dost thou remember Sicily?"

Always, always—and with unquenchable longings!

PHILIP HOBSBAUM.

*The Guinness Book of Poetry 1958/9* (Putnam 10s. 6d.).

*Facing North*: Terence Heywood & Edward Lowbury (Mitre Press, 18s.).

*The Alighting Leaf*: A. J. McGeoch (Putnam, 8s. 6d.).

*Barbara, Martyr and Saint*: John Hoffman (Guild Press, 12s. 6d.).

*The First Childermas*: William Kean Seymour (Signet Press, 7s. 6d.).

THE poems in the third Guinness Book, including no less than five originally published in *Outposts*, display the high level of controlled competence which we have come to expect—perhaps, even, to demand—from our poets. There is wit and there is wisdom, there is subtlety and finesse in the use of language, there is a fair diversity of invention, a wide range of poetic forms, and above all, there is clarity. It is all exceedingly pleasant, polished and so well-mannered that J. A. Lindon's cunningly contrived parody of Dylan Thomas, *Poem in Tubwater* ("It was my dirtiest year to heaven"), sticks out like a red nose at a temperance meeting.

This collection has everything except that vital explosive element, a fever in the blood to promote the splutter of anger, the sweat of passion, the scream of derision. Oh, for a Skelton, a

Swift or a Swinburn; or even for a native Whitman or Patchen, Corso or Ginsberg! Instead, among the prize-winning poems (How do they pick them?) we have a mediocre Auden and a tinsel Sitwell, a pleasing triviality from Plomer in the manner of W. H. Davies, a typically good Muir and, the pick of a humdrum quintet, a short essay in satire by Robert Lowell. Among the remaining sixty-odd poems those by Patricia Beer, Philip Gardner, David Holbrook, Jenny Joseph, Roy McFadden, John Wain, Vernon Scannell and Sheila Wingfield deserve special mention. All in all, this faithful reflection of the present state of British poetry is remarkably good value for the price of fifty cigarettes.

*Facing North* is a curious ragbag of poems and photographs in praise of the Northern hemisphere, but good to dip into. The first part is a collection of Terence Heywood's poems, many of them dating from his sojourn at Oxford, most of them reprinted from a wide variety of journals including *Outposts*, and ranging from the good, like *Orientation*, to the slipshod and taking in a motley crowd of near-misses and experiments that do not quite come off, *Autumnal Dendrology in a College Garden*, for example.

The second part is a long narrative fairy tale, *Trolls*, by Edward Lowbury. Apart from a few memorable passages it is unconvincing and second-rate; Mr. Lowbury had a greatly superior poem in the Guinness Book. The final section, a very uneven anthology compiled by Terence Heywood, draws on Blake and Beowulf, on Lawrence and Emily Dickinson, on Burns and Robinson Jeffers. The poem I like best in this most unusual selection is *A Day in January* by Hal Summers.

Mr. McGeoch's poetry is delightful when freed from the discipline of rhyme, but the twenty poems in his first collection do not suggest more than a pleasant lyrical talent, whereas John Hoffman's long narrative poem is full of rhetoric, fire and fervour. Saint Barbara is the patroness of miners and her martyrdom is the poet's inspiration. There can be no denying the validity of his visionary interpretation and it is unfortunate that his poetry is so inadequate a means of expression that thought and feeling are lost in a jingle-jangle of words.

Mr. Hoffman could learn a lot from *The First Childermas*, a fluent, economical and accomplished verse play that extracts yet another shade of meaning from the illimitable possibilities of the Christmas story.

B. EVAN OWEN.



*Lupercal*: Ted Hughes (Faber, 12s. 6d.).

*The Collector*: Peter Redgrove (Routledge, 12s. 6d.).

*The Masks of Love*: Vernon Scannell (Putnam, 7s. 6d.).

*The Interior Diagram*: James Turner (Cassell, 15s.).

WHEN a young poet is fortunate enough to attract public attention with his first volume, and especially if his work exhibits a distinctive quality which can easily be seized upon and labelled by the critics, there is always a danger that in subsequent volumes he may attempt to repeat his initial success by exploiting, perhaps even exaggerating, his own mannerisms. With *The Hawk in the Rain*, Mr. Ted Hughes made something of a name for his pre-occupation with brute force and violence, almost, it seemed, for their own sake; though one or two of the more discerning critics did suggest that his poetry had aroused interest simply because it came as a refreshing change from the "neutral tone" of the Movement poets who had been monopolising the limelight, so to speak. Certainly there was both vitality and verbal exuberance in his poetry, yet if one examined his diction closely one found that his boisterous effects were often achieved at the expense of the poetry. In his second volume, *Lupercal*, Mr. Hughes has not entirely avoided falling a victim to his own reputation. There are times when he seems determined to introduce the characteristic violence at all costs:

"And we longed for a death trampled by such horses. . . ."  
(*A dream of Horses*)

"The flies' furious arena."  
(*To paint a Water Lily*)

there are times when he overdramatizes the situation, as in *Bullfrog*—

"Disgorging your gouts of darkness like a wounded god. . . ."  
or in the poem on a dead pig:

"I thumped it without feeling remorse.  
One feels guilty insulting the dead,  
Walking on graves. But this pig  
Did not seem able to accuse."

and when his idiosyncratic choice of epithet thinly disguises sentimentality or naivety of statement—

"Brutal as the stars of this month,  
Her pale head hung heavy as metal."  
(*Snowdrop*)

Yet these are minor exceptions and, having pointed them out, one should not make too much of them. On the whole, *Lupercal* is a considerable advance on *The Hawk in the Rain*, both in conception and execution; and it contains some outstanding poetry. The brute force and the violence are still in evidence but, in most cases, they no longer obtrude, being integral to the poem, as in *Hawk Roosting* or in the extraordinary poem entitled *Thrushes*:

“Is it their single-mind-sized skulls, or a trained  
Body, or genius, or a nestful of brats  
Gives their days this bullet and automatic  
Purpose? Mozart’s brain had it, and the shark’s mouth  
That hungers down the blood-sinell even to a leak of its own  
Side and devouring of itself: efficiency which  
Strikes too streamlined for any doubt to pluck at it  
Or obstruction deflect.”

If his studies of animals and birds are based on unusually accurate observation and detailed knowledge, they are imaginatively conceived; and even more impressive when the poet, instead of concentrating upon some isolated moment of power or violence, endeavours to recreate the whole complex experience:

“Does not take root like the badger. Wanders, cries;  
Gallops along land he no longer belongs to;  
Re-enters the water by melting.  
Of neither water nor land. Seeking  
Some world lost when he first dived, that he cannot  
come at since,  
Takes his changed body into the holes of lakes;  
As if blind, cleaves the stream’s push till he licks  
The pebbles of the source; from the sea  
To sea crosses in three nights.

Like a king in hiding.”

(*An Otter*)

Mr. Peter Redgrove is another vigorous young poet whose colloquial tone and individual approach to his subjects make an immediately favourable impact on the reader. His first volume, *The Collector*, is somewhat uneven in quality and uncertain in direction, but that is largely the result of his reaction against fashionable poses, and his own experiments with language and ideas. If he has written more than his share of what Mr. Lucie-Smith describes as “bug poems”, he is certainly not afraid to tackle

weightier matters. Indeed, his best poems (*Against Death, In Case of Atomic Attack* and *Bedtime Story for My Son*) are concerned with his attitudes to birth and death. At least, he expresses what he thinks and feels at the moment of the experience recorded, without cluttering up his poetry with reservations and near-retractions; so that what we may lose by over-simplification we gain in immediacy. He has a remarkable aptitude for recreating a scene or situation in a few well chosen words :

"A piano plays my aunt in a lacquered room . . ."

"Somebody is throttling that tree

By the way it's thrashing about . . ."

and (of pregnancy) :

"Behind her belly like a sleeping eye

Wellington-booted the shock-haired boy

Kicks up puddles like a spattering pen,

Knocks conkers and sprints through under leaves,

Watches my toecaps as he tackles a fib."

If Mr. Vernon Scannell has written better poems than are contained in the book under review, in which he seems to have been content at times to take the line of least resistance, *The Masks of Love* is, nevertheless, an enjoyable collection. There are no verbal fireworks or ingenious ideas to make the reader sit up and take notice, nor are there any poses or beatings of the poetic drum. One feels that he has learned something from life, and is more concerned with human understanding than with flourishing his pen. Mr. Scannell's poetry is honest and unpretentious; at its best when he is dealing with experience peculiar to intimate personal relationships, as in *The Jealous Wife, Second Child* and the title-poem; as its worst when he is contemplating the writing of poetry, as in *Letter to a Poet*. The personality of the poet, who takes his pleasures with a gentle dose of cynicism and his disillusionments with rueful good-humour, lends an individual flavour to his work.

Although one's attention is directed to the long poem which provides the title for Mr. James Turner's latest collection, one can only say that it is a disappointing failure, promising a great deal more than is even attempted, in the poetry at least. We are told that it "explores the relationship between the Five Senses and the Five Wounds of the Cross", but there is little evidence that any such inquiry has taken place. It is, in fact, a series of separate and mainly ineffective pieces—one for each of the Senses and the



Wounds—related only by woolly phrases like “the hall of Queens” and “darkfire Queen” which may possibly have some tremendous significance for the author, but which, within the actual context, could mean anything or nothing for the reader. The introduction of the Dwarf who is “privileged to see and hear things unseen and unheard by the majority of the courtiers” serves but to confuse the issue even more. Mr. Turner is on safer ground when dealing with what he can see with the external vision. By far the most successful poems in this collection are those concerned with landscapes or seascapes—*High Sea at Sunset*, *Summer Day*, *Rocks*, *Rockpools* and *Kynance Cove*—when the scene before him acts like a spring-board for his imagination. His sense of colour and movement is admirably conveyed in these poems, and his language is lively and free of stock poeticisms which tend to creep into his “mystical” and reflective pieces.

HOWARD SERGEANT.

<i>A Whisper on the Wind</i> : Michael O'Higgins (3s.).	}	All Published by
<i>The Loaded Trees</i> : Stuart Hoskins (3s.).		
<i>Main Line</i> : Brian Merton Gould (3s.).	}	
<i>Farrago</i> : D. J. Lockwood (3s.).		OUTPOSTS
<i>Portraits and Places</i> : Lewis Hosegood (3s.).		
<i>Green Blood</i> : Susan Glyn (5s.).	}	PUBLICATIONS

AT LEAST three of these poets appear to be going through an experimentalist stage (I say this with some hesitation because, on the strength of work under review, I once referred to a poet as “young” and it turned out that he was over 70!). In *A Whisper on the Wind* Michael O'Higgins alternates between poems of strictly formal pattern and free verse written in a flowing style reminiscent of William Carlos Williams, though not perhaps quite so dependent on the image. Surprisingly enough, it is in the more experimental poems (such as *Nightwalker* and *The Immigrants*) that he displays his talents to greatest advantage and demonstrates his ability to deal with complex subjects in a variety of rhythms; the structure, in these cases, determining the tempo of the poems.



Stuart Hoskins, on the other hand, obtains his effects in *The Loaded Trees* chiefly through the use of a personal idiom in which unexpectedly appropriate verbs and adjectives recreate the scene or event described. For instance, in *June Evening* the dog "misers out" pleasure, the square is "pygmied" with players, and the old men "tally their yesterdays". *The Peril* and a poem on Robert Burns stand out in this collection.

Brian Merton Gould includes poems to Hart Crane and Shelley in his booklet, but his "main line" seems to be an individualistic approach to unusual subjects, typified in such poems as *Grandly the Sinning Hordes Passed*, *The Boy's Breast was a Sail*, and *My Child, Your Child, Who is he that we should call him holy*. He has a good command of language, but some of his material needs assimilation.

Lightheartedness and humour are more in evidence in *Farrago*, particularly in such poems as *Quid Vos?*, *Country Songs* and the *Ballad* of the lad of noble birth who set out to prove himself superior; but the author, D. J. Lockwood, has an attractive lyrical style which can withstand the test of poetry of serious intent.

*Portraits and Places* is aptly titled and consistent in quality. It contains poems of comment on Boswell's picture of Emily Brontë and a portrait by an unknown artist, and the author's own sketches of a sleeping child, of biblical characters and servicemen caught in off-guard moments, as well as poems about specific places. Lewis Hosegood is already mature in outlook and craftsmanship, and his colloquial tone is eminently suitable to poetry of this genre.

Susan Glyn's poems have been appearing in various periodicals over the last few years under the pen-name of "Hilary Glyn", and it is interesting to see them assembled at last in one collection under her own name. What impresses me most about her work is the way in which a genuine philosophical outlook is combined with a rich sense of imagery, at once colourful and evocative, and how the one fittingly supports and reinforces the other, so that thought and feeling are fused in the written line. Whilst there are a few separate lyrics in the collection, it is *The Wheel*, a cycle of twelve poems based on the seasons and the months of the year, which captures and holds the reader's imagination.

MARGARET KING.

## NOTICES

OUTPOSTS PUBLICATIONS. The latest additions to the *Outposts Modern Poets Series* of booklets are: *The Loaded Trees* by Stuart Hoskins, *Main Line* by Brian Merton Gould, *Portraits and Places* by Lewis Hosegood, *Lost Dimensions* by Fred Cogswell, the Canadian poet, *All Weathers Chancing* by Margaret Curry, *To Carve an Effigy* by A. E. Lawton, *The Talisman* by "Nicodemus", and *Green Blood* by Susan Glyn. For details see list opposite.

THE HEADLANDS, poems by Howard Sergeant (published by Putnams) can be ordered through local booksellers or obtained from this address, price 8s. (including postage). "Those who despair of the aims and values of modern poetry should ponder Mr. Sergeant and think again."—*Contemporary Review*.

THE DULWICH GROUP. Monthly poetry readings are held by the Dulwich Group at the Crown and Greyhound, Dulwich Village, on the last Wednesday of each month. The meetings are free to the public, though a collection is taken to defray expenses. The Crown and Greyhound is easily reached from North Dulwich Station (London Bridge) and Herne Hill (Victoria). It is close to the 37 bus route. The last meeting of the present series will be held on 29th June when Elizabeth Jennings, George MacBeth and Donald Hall will be amongst the readers of their own work. After the June meeting there will be an interval of two months and the Winter Series will begin on Wednesday, 28th September.